

# Global CEOs focus on the re

**Chief executives of law societies and bar associations from around the world converged on the headquarters of the Law Society of Ireland for a unique joint conference of the CEEBA AND IILACE organisations**

**B**lackhall Place hosted its biggest-ever international conference when chief executives of law societies and bar associations from no less than 50 jurisdictions around the world attended a unique event.

This was by far the largest gathering of CEOs of law societies and bar associations that has ever taken place. The conference was held in Dublin over three days from 30 September to 3 October 2009. It was the first-ever joint conference of two separate organisations, namely the Chief Executives of European Bar Associations (CEEBA) and the International Institute of Law Association Chief Executives (IILACE).

That the conference was held in Ireland was due to the influence of the Law Society of Ireland director general Ken Murphy, who is a former president of CEEBA and is currently the vice-president of IILACE.

The bar associations and law societies represented at the



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President Mary McAleese welcomes director general Ken Murphy and Czech Bar Association CEO Michaela Strisova to Áras an Uachtaráin

meetings in Blackhall Place have a collective membership of well over a million lawyers. They comprise a diverse range of organisations that have representative, regulatory, educational or other responsibilities – some with compulsory and some with voluntary membership. The CEOs who participated were

key figures with a vast collective experience of how law societies are run.

The legal profession everywhere is facing massive challenges, not least those caused by the global economic and financial crises. Responding effectively to these difficulties is itself a major challenge for the law societies and bar associations

around the world. The need for CEOs of law societies and bar associations to come together to learn from each other's insights and experience – in the interest of the legal professions and publics they serve – had never been greater.

Speakers discussed topics of relevance to the daily work of a CEO of a law society or bar association, in addition to hearing a number of expert guest speakers, including the internationally-renowned guru and author Richard Susskind.

The special value of this conference lay in the willingness of colleagues to share with each other their knowledge, experience and expertise as CEOs of similar, if not identical, organisations.

### Recession and profession

'The recession and the profession' was the main topic discussed at the conference. CEOs discussed in detail the major challenges for those who represent the legal profession and how best to assist lawyers



That's a good one! Douglas Mill (speaker from DM Consulting), Ken Murphy and Henry F White (executive director of the American Bar Association)



A panel of speakers – Malcolm Heins (Law Society of Upper Canada), Lorna Jack (Law Society of Scotland), Jan Suyver (Nederlandse Orde van Advocaten), Nalini Gangen (Cape Law Society of South Africa) and Koulia Vakis (Cyprus Bar Association)

# cession and the profession

seeking to survive in practice. The major challenges for those who regulate the legal profession in a recession were also analysed. Other topics included 'The financing of law societies and bar associations', 'Education and admission to the profession' and 'Corporate governance'.

Jaime Watt from Navigator Consulting in Canada gave a presentation entitled 'What does international research tell us about the public's perceptions of the legal profession?' and discussed options to improve these perceptions.

Management authority Glenn Tecker, from Tecker Consulting in the US, provided guidance on



Joint chairs of a joint conference – John Hoyles (CEO of the Canadian Bar Association and president of IILACE) and Anne Ramberg (CEO of the Swedish Bar Association and president of CEEBA)

'How to manage not-for-profits in a downturn'. Unexpectedly, this lecture had to be delivered

live by video-link over the net from New Jersey. This was the first time the Law Society had hosted an international video link over the Skype system, but the Blackhall Place IT department ensured everything ran smoothly.

Andrew Fryer, a senior London-based manager of the insurance brokers Willis, provided an insight into the current problems of the professional indemnity insurance market with a paper entitled 'A looming crisis of unavailability?'

The conference concluded

with a paper from Richard Susskind, who discussed the central thesis of his most recent book *The End of Lawyers? Rethinking the Nature of Legal Services*.

## Presidential honour

Farmligh House was made available by the state as the venue for the first night's welcome reception and dinner. Minister for Justice Dermot Ahern was unable to attend due to campaigning commitments for the *Libson II* referendum. However, he had been a strong supporter of the conference coming to Ireland, and it was through his intervention that Farmligh had been made available.

There was a special honour for the conference when President Mary McAleese hosted a reception in *Áras* an Uachtaráin for delegates on the first day of the conference. She delivered a speech expressing her appreciation and strong support for the vitally important work of chief executives of law societies and bar associations across the world, which touched a chord with everyone present.



Jan Martin, executive director of the Law Society of South Australia



Raymond Ho, secretary general of the Law Society of Hong Kong

## WHAT ARE CEEBA AND IILACE?

### CEEBA

CEEBA (formerly ESSEBA) was formed in 1960. Its members have been meeting annually to discuss issues of common interest and to learn from each other for just short of 50 years. It comprises chief executives of national law societies and bar associations from all over Europe. The current chair is the CEO of the Swedish Bar Association, Anne Ramberg.

### IILACE

IILACE had its first meeting in Edinburgh in 1999. It is an organisation with a similar purpose to CEEBA – but with a worldwide perspective, as evidenced by its meeting last year in Windhoek, Namibia. It is scheduled to meet next year in Vancouver, Canada. Chief executives from dozens of countries all over the globe participate in its annual meetings. Its current president is CEO of the Canadian Bar Association, John Hoyles.



Dr Martin McAleese and President Mary McAleese greet Merete Smith (secretary general of the Norwegian Bar Association)